

VZCZCXRO9461  
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHSR  
DE RUEHROV #0136 2700922  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 270922Z SEP 07  
FM AMEMBASSY VATICAN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0800  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE  
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN 0830

C O N F I D E N T I A L VATICAN 000136

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 9/26/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [VT](#)

SUBJECT: HOLY SEE: CARDINAL MARTINO ON IRAN, IRAQ, OTHER SUBJECTS

CLASSIFIED BY: Christopher Sandrolini, DCM, EXEC, State.

REASON: 1.4 (d)

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary. Cardinal Martino, head of two Holy See agencies (Justice and Peace, and Migrants) spoke with Ambassador September 25 on a variety of subjects, including Iraq, Iran, Papal travel to the US, Secretary Rice, TIP, and his own travel.

Martino pointed out that his candor on Iraq was according to the Pope's wishes, and that he is not against the United States.

End summary.

[¶2.](#) (U) Ambassador called on Cardinal Raffaele Martino on September 25. Martino is President of two Holy See dicasteries (departments) -- the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples. Monsignor James Reinert and Ambassador's Special Assistant also attended. Martino, always outspoken, addressed a number of issues, including Iran, Iraq, Zimbabwe, the Pope's upcoming travel to the United States, and the mini-flap in the press over Secretary Rice's recent request to see the Pope. Martino's points follow in paras 3-7 below.

[¶3.](#) (C) Iran:

-- Ahmadinejad's speech at Columbia University represents a "great show of democracy".

-- French FM Kouchner's comments about war with Iran were counterproductive; threats are no good and don't work.

-- Iran is unlikely to have nuclear weapons.

-- Diplomacy worked with North Korea and can work with Iran as well; this would be the best course.

[¶4.](#) (C) Iraq:

-- Martino's past criticism of the war was a direct reflection of what Pope John Paul II told him to say -- "before, during, and after" the war. Americans sometimes think Martino is unfriendly to the US, but "this is not true".

-- the Holy See knew Saddam Hussein would leave Iraq or give up power, had the US only waited a few months more.

[¶5.](#) (U) Zimbabwe:

-- Martino would appreciate knowing if the US is planning additional assistance to Zimbabwe.

[¶6.](#) (C) Pope Benedict's US travel:

-- Martino said the trip to the United Nations was his own suggestion.

-- Martino (formerly the Vatican's longtime UN Observer in New York) is on good terms with UNSYG Ban Ki-Moon; prior to the SYG's meeting earlier this year with the Pope, he asked Martino if he should invite Benedict XVI to the UN. Martino said yes.

-- The April time frame for the visit is good for the UN, which is relatively quiet at that time. The SYG will call a General Meeting of the Assembly in honor of the Pope.

-- A fall 2008 trip, as initially proposed, was scrapped as being too close to the US elections.

17. (C) Secretary Rice and the Pope:

-- Press reports about the Pope's declining to see the Secretary in August have been overblown; Pope Benedict's practice is normally to receive only heads of state.  
-- Martino did not know the origin of the story, but Reinert commented that "the Vatican is full of leaks".

18. (SBU) Other:

-- Martino will be traveling to Ecuador, Brazil, and Argentina at the end of this week, returning to Rome October 11.  
-- Martino is very interested in a TIP conference (co-sponsored by Embassy Vatican) taking place in mid-October in Rome, and is considering a "Justice and Peace" award for Sister Eugenia Bonetti, the principal inspiration for the event. (Sister Eugenia met President and Mrs. Bush during their visit here in June of this year.)

19. (C) Comment: As Martino pointed out, his frankness on the Iraq war should not be mistaken for hostility to the US. Though nearing retirement age, the cardinal remains a lively and influential figure within the Holy See. His interest in Sister Eugenia is both gratifying and a nice example of the roundabout way in which the Church's many good works sometimes come to notice -- post's work with Sister Eugenia led to her meeting with the First Lady, which in turn helped spur Department funding for Sister Eugenia's long-cherished dream of hosting a networking and training conference for other nuns around the world who are also fighting Trafficking in Persons; and the conference itself has raised her own profile within the Vatican.

Sandrolini